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Chairmen Nadler and Delahunt Examine Extraordinary Rendition

Lawmakers Hear from Maher Arar, a Victim of U.S. Rendition to Torture

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WASHINGTON, D.C. -- Congressman Jerrold Nadler (NY-08), Chair of the Judiciary Subcommittee on the Constitution, Civil Rights and Civil Liberties and Congressman Bill Delahunt (MA-10), Chair of the Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on International Organizations, Human Rights and Oversight today held a joint hearing to examine the practice of "extraordinary rendition."

"Sending someone to another country to be tortured is at odds with everything we stand for as a Nation," said Rep. Nadler. "The Administration cannot claim to reject torture when it ships people overseas with the explicit intention that other countries will torture suspects. As Mr. Arar's unfortunate experience shows us, there is ample evidence that our government has knowingly sent innocent people to torture chambers."

"Extraordinary renditions have eroded American prestige," said Rep. Delahunt. "Rather than a country of laws, we are viewed as a country that employs torture by proxy. Congress needs to examine this Bush Administration practice and determine how best to prevent future renditions from occurring."

Since the September 11th terrorist attacks, numerous press reports and court cases filed against U.S. officials and agents have shed light on the government's practice of "extraordinary rendition," or the covert transfer of individuals suspected of terrorism to foreign states known to practice torture for the purpose of detention and harsh interrogation or torture. The Bush administration has defended rendition as a necessary component of its war on terror, but has insisted that it does not transfer suspects for the purpose of interrogation using torture.

At today's hearing, lawmakers heard from Canadian Maher Arar, a victim of extraordinary rendition. Mr. Arar was detained at JFK Airport while transiting through the United States to his home in Canada and sent to Syria, where he was imprisoned for almost a year and tortured. Syria released him without charge, and a Canadian commission subsequently exonerated Mr. Arar of any link to terrorism.

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